POLICY BOARD
FALL REPORT
2019

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1. MEETING SCHEDULE

VRABE will maintain the following meeting schedule, as set by the Policy Board in May 2018:

- Early October written update
- December meeting with Regional Director (Update and Budget)
- May full meeting

The May, 2019 Annual Meeting was graciously hosted by Michael Emmett, Superintendent of Wethersfield Public Schools. We'll be asking one of you to host our May 2020 meeting, to reinforce our commitment to our regional nature, and to all members.

2. FINANCIAL

a. State & Local Funds

You may recall from the ED-244 the total budget for 2019-2020 is $1,083,477, a 2.3% increase from the previous year. The was due primarily to increases in Instructional Supplies to purchase mandated CASAS testing materials, Non-Instructional (Other) to fully implement eTesting, and wage increases. Recall also that wages have been indexed to local unions (Teachers to the Vernon Education Association, Administrators to the Vernon Administrators Association, etc.), so we can expect small increases over time in that line item.

As was expressed at the Annual Meeting in May, VRABE's per-student cost is below the state average, and below (sometimes dramatically so) many other towns and Regional Providers. While we continue to believe we provide a high-quality program and a very

reasonable price, we know that statewide enrollments are dropping (see below) and our focus for the 2020-2021 fiscal year will be cost reduction.

b. Program Enhancement Projects (PEP) Grants

Our total PEP Grants reduced this year, from $193,000 in 2018-2019 to $188,000. These are federal pass-through funds designed to enhance targeted programs. Specific Grant amounts, which benefit all students in VRABE towns, are as follows:

Workforce Readiness (CDP, NEDP):	$30,000
Family Literacy (Elementary ESL, GED):	$50,000
Expansion of National External Diploma Program:	$30,000
Transition to Postsecondary Education & Training:	$40,000
Integrated English Literacy/Civics Education:	$38,000
TOTAL:	$188,000

c. State Cap on Adult Education Reimbursements

The preliminary state grant cap percentage is approximately 6.71%, a reduction from last year's 7.98% CAP. The descriptor "CAP" is a bit of a misnomer – It represents the percentage by which all town's state Adult Education Reimbursement Grant will be reduced. I will plan to give the details for your town to Policy Board members at our December individual meeting.

3. PROGRAMMATIC

a. New Certification Courses

Recall last year we piloted a new course, The National Retail Foundation's Customer Service Certification, designed to teach ESL students the English language in context, and simultaneously give them the opportunity to earn a nationally-recognized certificate that Employers value. The course ran at our E.O. Smith High School site, and was offered to all VRABE ESL students. We're pleased to announce of the ten students who started the course, six completed it, and all six passed their national certification exam. We're thrilled with their success! We currently plan on expanding the number of course offerings

We're currently in the final planning stages for offering, in partnership with the Hockanum Valley Community Council (HVCC), a ServSafe Certification Course for our students. Offered primarily to our ESL students, this course is designed to enhance employability by giving students the entry-level food handling certification. This course will also have a Volunteer/Community Service component, as we have found this is an excellent way to learn English contextually. The course will be held at HVCC, and will be open to all VRABE ESL students.

b. OEC Partnership

The first semester our partnership with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to provide childcare services to students ran successfully, as did a follow-on summer program. We've

had two graduates from the program so far – students who could not otherwise have attended school except for the program. The OEC understands and appreciates that when mothers and fathers do better, their children do better. They also view attainment by a parent of a high school diploma or GED as a step likely to be extremely beneficial to their child.

c. Enrollment

Many school systems throughout the state face declining enrollment. The same is true for Adult Education, with the state's overall enrollment down 22.8% from 2013 to 2018 (figures not yet available for 2019). Conversely, VRABE's enrollment, while dropping by 10 students last year (531 vice 541 in 2018), increased by 14.7% over the same period.

Enrollment in Adult Education throughout the state closely tracks the state's Unemployment Rate. When unemployment rates are low competition for labor increases, mitigating the impact of not having a high school diploma. When unemployment rates increase, opportunities for those without a high school diploma evaporate, leading many back to VRABE and other Providers. See charts at the end of this report tracking Connecticut's Adult Education Enrollment first with the Unemployment Rate, then with VRABE's enrollment.

d. Provider Performance Summary

Adult Education programs throughout the state are measured for effectiveness by the CSDE Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education's Provider Performance Summary (PPS). This instrument measures 12 indicators in four categories: Recruitment, Retention, Testing, and Performance.

VRABE is pleased to announce our Provider Performance Summary increased by over 35%! While year-to-year fluctuations are more common in Adult Education than in K-12, this represents a validation of the efforts of your teachers and staff in VRABE.

e. Increase in Credit Diploma Program Graduation Requirements

The CSDE has advised us to anticipate an increase in CDP graduation credit to require a minimum of 25 credits. They have written a formal legislative proposal to change commencing with the class of 2023. VRABE is in the process of developing a proposal to put before the Policy Board at our Annual Meeting in May.

f. Cohort Graduation Rate/Transfer to Adult Education

At the May, 2019 Annual Meeting, several attending Policy Board members asked that I look into PSIS Exit Codes for transferring into Adult Education programs from high school. Here's what I found:

1. State of Connecticut definitions as set forth in their Approved State Plan are based on federal definitions set forth the Code of Federal Regulations (34 C.F.R 200.19) and the Federal Register (73 FR 64508), established as part of the "No Child Left Behind" legislation;

2. Those documents specifically exclude GED programs from counting as "transferred out for the purpose of calculating graduation rate and must remain in the adjusted cohort," thus decreasing cohort graduation rates;

3. PSIS Exit Code 27, "Transfer to an Adult High School Credit Diploma (AHSCD) program where education services are provided," similarly decreases cohort graduation rates, as the state does not consider an AHSCD to be a "regular high school diploma" as set forth in federal legislation and regulation.

4. References:

   i. Connecticut State Department of Education, *Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate Documentation, April 2016*;
   ii. Connecticut State Department of Education, *Using Accountability Results to Guide Improvement*, January 2019, Fourth Edition;
   iii. Code of Federal Regulations, 34 C.F.R. 200.19 et seq;
   iv. US Code, Title 20, Section 6311, State Plans
   v. Francis Apaloo, Education Consultant, Connecticut State Department of Education.

4. TECHNOLOGY

a. eTesting

A requirement of one of our PEP Grants is that we implement eTesting for our students. By way of background, all students take a variety of placement and progress assessments throughout the year, beginning with placement tests at Orientation and progress testing to begin and end every semester/trimester. As one might expect, the eTesting requirement is far more burdensome than paper testing, given the necessity of ensuring appropriate technology at every location and the trepidation with which many adult students approach computers. Nevertheless we're making progress and have overcome many technical issues. A "Shout-Out" to the IT folks from all our members for their cooperation with our eTesting Coordinator, Elissa Blanchard. CASAS software has to be installed at each site, and in some cases updated operating systems as well. The IT folks from all members have been universally helpful.

5. PERSONNEL

a. Openings

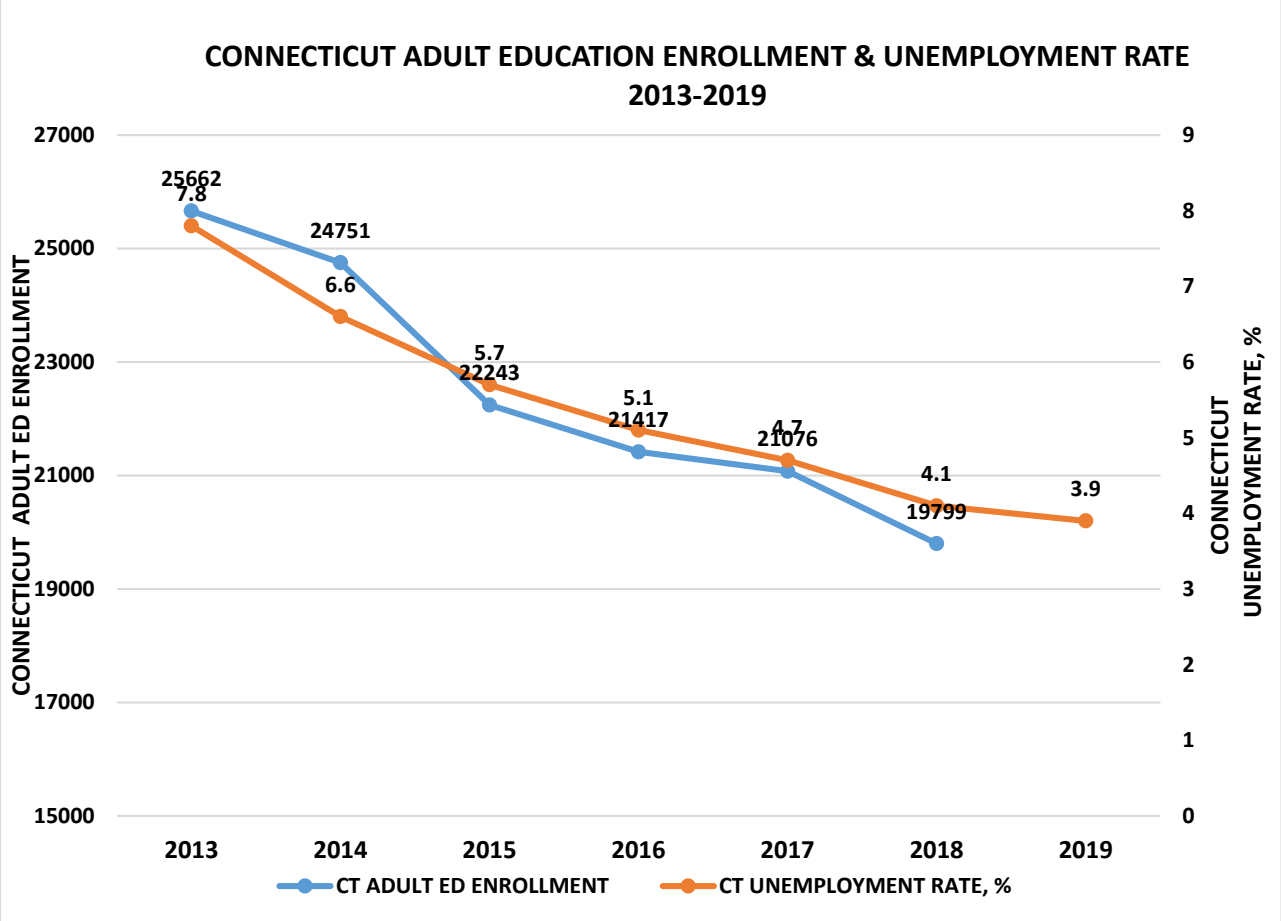
The primary personnel issue we face is staff turnover, which occurs at a higher rate than in K-12. While we have a core of teachers and staff dedicated solely to adult education, many of our teachers connect with VRABE as a second job, and changes in their lives increase our turnover. We've filled all but one position, a mathematics teacher in one of our Credit Diploma Programs.

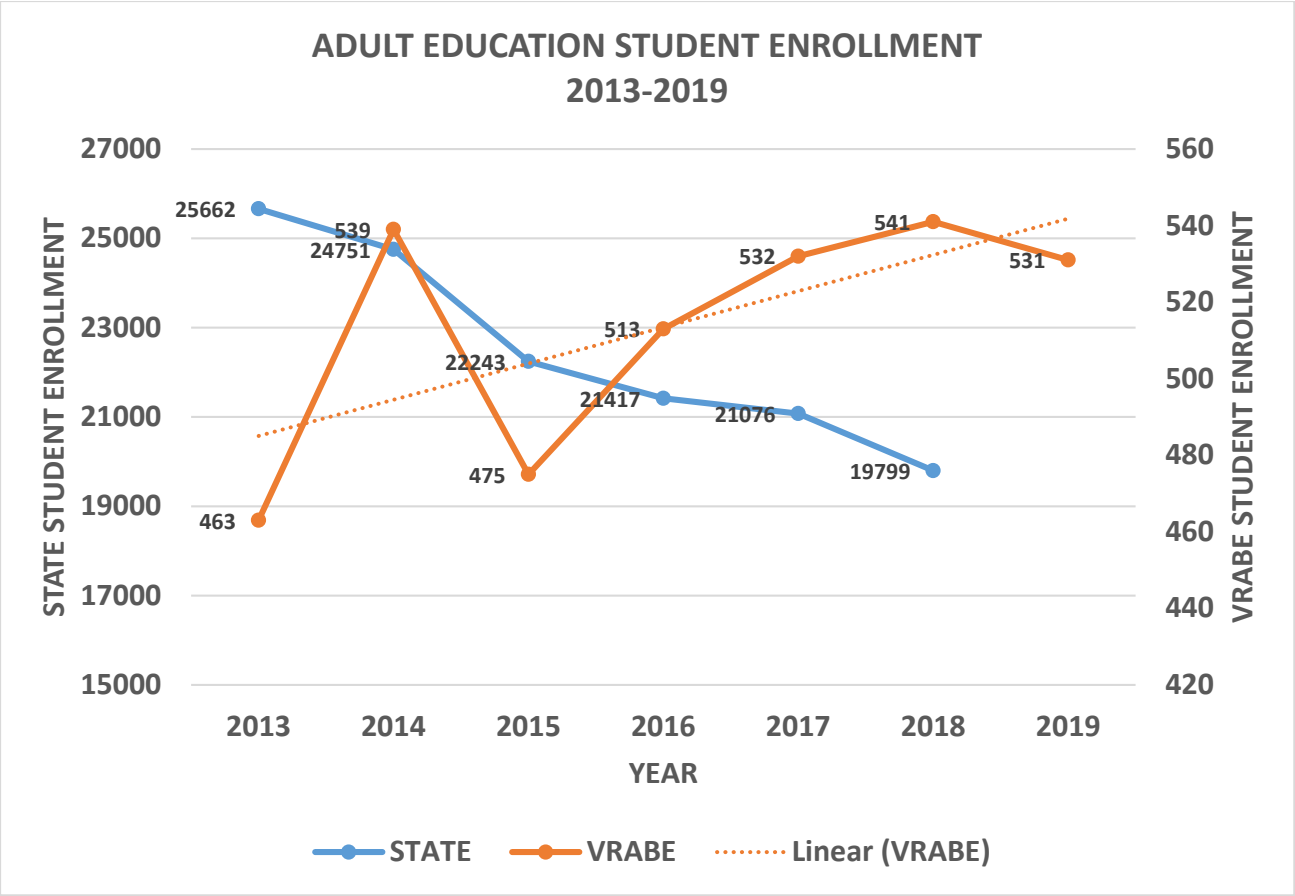
b. Shout Outs

A Shout-Out to Chris Pallis, awarded the VRABE Educator of the Year Award at our meeting in August. Chris, who teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at VRABE's Tolland High School and E.O. Smith High School sites, has been with VRABE for 10 years, and is a highly respected and admired colleague. A World Language teacher at Bolton High School, his overriding characteristic is a deep concern for his students. He creates a self-empowering classroom where students feel free to control their own environment. He has a deeply kind heart and helps connect his students to others who can help them personally and professionally.

Another Shout-Out to the Academy of Arts & Learning, our childcare partner in the OEC Childcare Pilot, who earned the Friend of Adult Education Award at the Graduation ceremony in June. Executive Director Pauline Fortier far exceeded our expectations in working with us for planning and implementation, and frankly we could not have done it without her and the Academy of Arts folks!

One of our NEDP graduates from last year, Claudia Pagani, received a national-level $500 scholarship from CASAS, to begin her post-secondary education at Manchester Community College. Here's the link to the NEDP News and her story: https://www.casas.org/nedp/graduate-stories/2019/09/30/nedp-changing-lives-scholarship-recipient-claudia Congratulations to Claudia!




ADULT EDUCATION STUDENT ENROLLMENT
2013-2019
STATE STUDENT ENROLLMENT
VRABE STUDENT ENROLLMENT
27000
25000
23000
21000
19000
17000
15000
560
540
520
500
480
460
440
420
25662
24751
22243
21417
21076
19799
463
539
475
513
532
541
531
2013
2014
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
YEAR
STATE
VRABE
Linear (VRABE)